

Deck Inspection Checklist: Ledger, Guards, and Stairs

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Property

INSPECTION DATE

INSPECTED BY

PROPERTY ADDRESS

OCCUPANCY

DECK OR PORCH TYPE

WALKING SURFACE

ACCESS METHOD

WEATHER DURING THE WALK

☐ Owner or agent present

☐ Spa, hot tub, or other concentrated load on the deck

Ledger and house attachment

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Ledger identified, or the deck is recorded as freestanding	☐	☐	☐	
Visible ledger is at least a nominal 2x8 of treated or durable wood	☐	☐	☐	
Ledger not supported on stone or masonry veneer	☐	☐	☐	
Ledger uses visible lags or through-bolts, not toenails or deck screws only	☐	☐	☐	
Visible fasteners are staggered, with washers if you can see the heads	☐	☐	☐	
Ledger not pulled away from the house; no growing daylight at the joint	☐	☐	☐	
Ledger not carrying a concentrated beam or girder end	☐	☐	☐	
Lateral hold-down hardware visible, or the deck is freestanding	☐	☐	☐	
If the house connection cannot be verified, independent posts support the house side	☐	☐	☐	

Flashing and moisture at the wall

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Corrosion-resistant flashing visible above an attached ledger	☐	☐	☐	
Flashing not rusted through, short, or dumping water behind the ledger	☐	☐	☐	
Door onto the deck has a threshold, flashing, or drip that sheds water	☐	☐	☐	
Flashing or sealant at rail posts and other wall penetrations is intact	☐	☐	☐	
House band, sheathing, or siding at the ledger not decayed or stained	☐	☐	☐	
No bare aluminum flashing hard against treated lumber	☐	☐	☐	

Downspouts and grade not wetting the ledger or post bases

☐☐☐

Joists, beams, and hangers

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Joists and beams identified from the underside or from grade	☐	☐	☐	
Underside entered, or the reason you stayed out is recorded	☐	☐	☐	
Joists framing into a ledger or beam sit in hangers or on a ledger strip	☐	☐	☐	
Joist ends have bearing; no joist hanging on nails in end grain only	☐	☐	☐	
Joists and rim not heavily decayed, split at hangers, or crushed at bearing	☐	☐	☐	
Beams bear on posts, not hung from the house ledger by lags	☐	☐	☐	
No obvious beam sag or a dropped line of joists	☐	☐	☐	
Rim or blocking at joist ends keeps joists from rolling	☐	☐	☐	
No large midspan notches or holes that look unsafe	☐	☐	☐	

Posts and footings

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Posts reasonably plumb, not twisted or leaning	☐	☐	☐	
Post size recorded; no single height used as a fail	☐	☐	☐	
Posts connected to footings or piers so they cannot slip or lift	☐	☐	☐	
Posts in soil are treated for ground contact, with the cut end not buried if you can see it	☐	☐	☐	
Visible footings or piers present; posts not on soil, scrap brick, or a loose rock	☐	☐	☐	
No heaved, exposed, or obviously undersized footing you can see	☐	☐	☐	
Post bases not decayed, insect-galled, or sitting in a puddle	☐	☐	☐	
Tall or freestanding decks have visible bracing, or a reason is recorded	☐	☐	☐	
Stair stringers bear on a pad or posts, not on bare soil	☐	☐	☐	

Guards, railings, and handrails

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Guard present on open sides more than 30 inches above grade, if you measured the drop	☐	☐	☐	
Guard height measured; IRC model is not less than 36 inches at the walking surface	☐	☐	☐	
Openings do not pass a 4-inch sphere, if you checked	☐	☐	☐	
Guard posts reach the framing; 4x4 posts not notched at the deck	☐	☐	☐	
Guard posts tied to joists or blocking, not only into the decking	☐	☐	☐	

Top rail does not deflect loosely or pull the posts	☐	☐	☐	_____
Open sides of stairs have a guard if the drop exceeds 30 inches	☐	☐	☐	_____
Graspable handrail on each flight with four or more risers	☐	☐	☐	_____
Handrail height 34 to 38 inches above nosings, if you measured	☐	☐	☐	_____

Stairs and landings

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Stairs or a landing identified, or N/A if the deck has none	☐	☐	☐	_____
Riser height measured; IRC model maximum is 7 3/4 inches	☐	☐	☐	_____
Tread depth measured; IRC model minimum is 10 inches	☐	☐	☐	_____
Largest-to-smallest rise or run in the flight not more than 3/8 inch, if you measured	☐	☐	☐	_____
Stringers attached at the deck, not split, decayed, or hanging on toenails	☐	☐	☐	_____
Treads fully supported, not loose, split, or rotten	☐	☐	☐	_____
Open risers more than 30 inches above grade do not pass a 4-inch sphere	☐	☐	☐	_____
Landing or grade at top and bottom is reasonably level and not a trip	☐	☐	☐	_____
Stair lighting present, or recorded as absent	☐	☐	☐	_____

Decking boards and fasteners

Item	OK	Defect	N/A	Notes
Boards not heavily cupped, split, decayed, or sprung from the joists	☐	☐	☐	_____
Each board has fasteners at the supporting joists you can see	☐	☐	☐	_____
Fasteners and hangers not heavily rusted through	☐	☐	☐	_____
Visible hardware looks coated or stainless, not bright common nails in treated wood	☐	☐	☐	_____
No proud nails or screws that are a trip or puncture hazard	☐	☐	☐	_____
Composite boards and rails match a visible label or the maker's span, if labeled	☐	☐	☐	_____
Boards not holding standing water in tight joints	☐	☐	☐	_____
Walking surface does not bounce or sway as if a support has failed	☐	☐	☐	_____

Findings and sign-off

FINDINGS

ACTION

INSPECTOR SIGNATURE

OWNER OR AGENT SIGNATURE

TIME SIGNED

Reference only. Verify against local codes, a licensed inspector or a qualified contractor.